



# COMMON QUESTIONS

## WHAT IS THE PEOPLE'S GARDEN INITIATIVE?

Secretary Vilsack began the People's Garden Initiative – named in honor of President Lincoln's description of USDA as the "People's Department" - in 2009 as an effort to challenge employees to create gardens at USDA facilities. It has since grown into a collaborative effort of over 400 local and national organizations all working together to establish community and school gardens across the country. The simple act of planting a garden can help unite neighborhoods in a common effort and inspire locally-led solutions to challenges facing our country – from hunger to the environment.

## HOW DID IT START?

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack declared the grounds surrounding USDA Headquarters in Washington, DC the first People's Garden on February 12, 2009 in honor of Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday.

## WHAT IS THE HISTORY BEHIND THE NAME?

When President Lincoln founded USDA in 1862, he called it The People's Department. USDA continues to honor his vision for a Department that serves the American people every day and in every way through The People's Garden Initiative.

## WHAT IS A PEOPLE'S GARDEN?

People's Gardens vary in size and type, but all are required to have three components in common. They must benefit the community, in some cases by creating recreational spaces and in others by providing a harvest for a local food bank or shelter. They must be collaborative - that is, the garden must be created and maintained by a partnership of local individuals, groups, or organizations. And third, they should incorporate sustainable practices. The gardens might use compost or mulch made by participants. They might contain native plants or encourage beneficial insects. They also might exemplify water conservation, for instance, capturing rain in a barrel to water the garden.

Gardens located at private residences are not eligible to become People's Gardens. You can declare an existing garden as a People's Garden as long as it incorporates the three components.

## WHERE ARE PEOPLE'S GARDENS LOCATED?

People's Gardens have expanded to all 50 states, three U.S. territories and five foreign countries. They are located at faith-based centers, on federal leased or owned property, at schools and other places within the community. Search the People's Gardens Interactive Map at [pubinfo.usda.gov/garden](http://pubinfo.usda.gov/garden) to find out where our gardens are located.

## HOW CAN PRODUCE BE USED THAT IS HARVESTED FROM A PEOPLE'S GARDEN?

All produce grown at a People's Garden on USDA owned or leased property is donated to help those in need. We invite our partners to join us in sharing your harvest with neighborhood food pantries, kitchens and shelters - which helps improve access to healthy, affordable food at a local level.

## HOW CAN I FIND A LOCAL FOOD PANTRY?

Ample Harvest, a partner of The People's Garden Initiative, diminishes hunger in America by helping people share their excess garden produce with neighborhood food pantries. To find a pantry near you, go to [ampleharvest.org](http://ampleharvest.org).

## IF I DONATE PRODUCE AND SOMEONE GETS SICK AM I LIABLE?

Donations of food and grocery items to non-profits to feed needy individuals are covered by the Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (Public Law 104-210). Unless there is gross negligence or misconduct on behalf of the donor, individuals and groups are not liable.

## HOW CAN MY GARDEN BE RECOGNIZED AS A PEOPLE'S GARDEN?

Enter your garden into the People's Garden database for it to be counted as a People's Garden and appear on the interactive map. In order to add your garden to this database, you will need to go to [thepeoplesgarden.gov](http://thepeoplesgarden.gov) to register your garden.

When you register your garden it will appear on the interactive map. Let everyone know the type of garden, who's involved, and how it benefits your neighborhood. After you register your garden, you can share your photos and request a free sign to show your support.